

RANSOMED HEART

LOVE GOD. LIVE FREE.

December 2010

Dearest Friends,

We are neck-deep now in the Christmas season.

I have a pretty strong hunch that about this point you are stressed over the things you have yet to finish before Christmas – *Is it too late to send out cards, what do I get your brother, should we have the neighbors over, is there enough time to get all this wrapping done?!*

Time to pause, take a deep breath, and find Jesus.

He is not merely the point of this holiday – he is also *our rescue* in the midst of it. (Dare I say, *from* it?) So, let's stop, and find Jesus.

One of my favorite Christmas meditations comes from this passage by Chesterton. (He is speaking of Bethlehem, and what it held in its hills that fateful night.)

...as the strange kings fade into a far country and the mountains resound no more with the feet of the shepherds; and only the night and the cavern lie in fold upon fold over something more human than humanity.

Savor that last passage for a moment. That feeding trough turned cradle held something *more* human than humanity? Wow. Do you think of Jesus as the most human human-being that ever lived?

It brings him back within reach.

I don't think we do it consciously, but over time what happens for most believers is that Jesus becomes something of a distant figure, *because* of our attempts at reverence. "You are high and lifted up," we sing, and many good choruses like it. We refer to him as "The Savior," and other such terms he never used for himself. What happens is Jesus is pushed away into the heavens – the very opposite of what he intended by coming to earth!

So one of the richest treasures of Christmas is how it turns our thoughts toward the humanity of Jesus. The incarnation. He is a man, it would be good to remember. His is the most human face of all.

Think again of these passages from his life:

...for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry (Luke 4:2).

Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well (John 4:6).

Jesus said, "I am thirsty" (John 19:28).

Wait – Jesus was hungry, tired, thirsty? Yes. He was a man. He got angry. He experienced loneliness. Frustration. Surprise (as in, “When Jesus heard this he was amazed” Luke 7:9). He was, as the creeds insist, fully human. Gethsemane was the most terrible sort of farce if Jesus was faking it.

The more we can grasp his humanity, the more we will find him someone we can approach, know, love, trust, adore.

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity... For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are (Hebrews 2:14, 4:15).

It will do your heart great good to remember Jesus was – and still is – a man. That he shares in your humanity. That his is the most human face of all. MacDonald called Jesus “the blossom of humanity.” Too much “heavens” stuff pushes Jesus away. His humanity brings him close again.

Thank you Christmas.

So here, at the end of the year, Stasi and I – along with the whole team at Ransomed Heart – want to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. It has been a joy and an honor to meet you at our events, to hear from you, to share in this wonderful mission, to pursue God together. We love you.

Most Sincerely,


John

PS If you are – as I’m embarrassed to admit I am – still catching up with your giving here at year’s end, do remember Ransomed Heart. We thank you. Happy Christmas!